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“DARK LADY AND FAIR MAN”: THE LOVE TRIANGLE IN SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS AND *ULYSSES*

MICHELLE BURNHAM

Modern commentators customarily begin a discussion of William Shakespeare’s Sonnets by dismissing the many speculative nineteenth century theories that developed out of the supposed autobiographical nature of the poems. In a valuable critical approach to James Joyce and the love triangle in *Ulysses*, however, the reader must embrace and include these theories, speculative as they may be. For, as Frank Budgen noted of Joyce, “Shakespeare the man... occupied him more than Shakespeare the maker of plays.”¹ And the early biographers whom Joyce read reconstructed “Shakespeare the man” from his sonnets more completely than from any of his other works. Even Sidney Lee, who disputed the existence of any autobiographical material in the poems, insisted that in the series of sonnets which deal with “a lover’s supersession by his friend in a mistress’s graces,” Shakespeare seemed to “draw directly on an incident in his own life.”²

The attempts to solve the mysteries of Shakespeare’s fair young man and dark lady mistress fascinated and amused Joyce. Not only did he incorporate these theories into his concept of the artist as cuckold and androgyne, but in this paper I shall argue that Joyce also used the poet-dark lady-young man love triangle of the sonnets as a model for the triangle between Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Blazes Boylan in *Ulysses*.

The critic Richard Brown points to Shakespeare as a fundamental source for Joyce’s interest in adultery—a theme which both “conditioned his approach to the whole of the literary tradition,”³ and clearly obsessed him in his own life. Just as it was “putative cuckoldry,” according to Richard Ellmann, that finally motivated Joyce to begin *Ulysses*,⁴ it is Bloom’s actual cuckoldry that is central to the novel’s schema. While Stephen’s discussion of Shakespeare’s “French triangle” (9.1065)⁵ occurs in “Scylla and Charybdis,” the meaning of that discussion for Joyce’s text emerges in episodes which more fully explore the

dynamics of the adultery by which Bloom becomes a cuckold. Therefore, I will focus in particular on Joyce's use of Sonnets 153 and 154 in "Lotus Eaters" and Sonnets 128 and 130 in "Sirens." Ultimately, by examining Joyce's manipulation of Shakespeare's model, an answer to the difficult question of Bloom's passive acceptance of his wife's adultery will emerge.

Of the many parallels which exist between Leopold Bloom and the Stratford Bard, most are discussed by William Schutte in his important work on *Ulysses* and in Vincent Cheng's excellent book on Shakespeare in *Finnegans Wake*. Neither Schutte nor Cheng, however, treat Joyce's use of the love triangle in Shakespeare's sonnets. While Schutte does mention Bloom's marked "incapacity to deal with the two potential dark ladies in his life,"⁶ his assignation of Martha Clifford and Gerty MacDowell to that role is unsupported by physical and textual evidence, and disregards Joyce's phrase which directly links Molly with the mistress of the sonnets (5.156). And it is of course Bloom's "incapacity to deal with" his dark wife and her infidelity that is most marked in *Ulysses*.

Vincent Cheng has noted Joyce's technique in the *Wake* of assigning characters—like Shakespearean cast members—to more than one role.⁷ In *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom exhibits a similar complexity of character by functioning both as Bloom's dark lady and his Ann Hathaway. Likewise, the sexually masculine Blazes Boylan bears less resemblance to the "master-mistress" of Sonnet 20 than either of the Blooms, both of whom display inconsistent gender roles. And Leopold Bloom neither idealizes nor worships the younger Boylan (though he is certainly an object of envy to the older man).⁸ Such discrepancies between source and fiction are vital to understanding the work of Joyce, whose deliberate use of a great many sources is matched by a deliberate selection of particular elements from those sources. In *Ulysses*, it is through his reversal of elements of Shakespeare in Bloom and in his treatment of Molly that Joyce denies the poet exclusive expression and gives a voice to the dark lady of the sonnets.

Almost as soon as the reader is introduced to Molly as a physically identifiable character, and not long after Bloom's domestic relationship with her has been established, Bloom mentally identifies both his wife and Boylan with the characters in Shakespeare's sonnets. In response to the recurrent and suggestive question "Who's getting it up?", Bloom imagines Molly—who has just received a letter from Boylan confirming their afternoon appointment—lying in bed reading her fortune with cards. As he anticipates their coupling, he thinks "Dark lady and fair man" (5.156), directly linking the pair with Shakespeare's adulterous lovers who, for lack of substantial biographical evidence, are typically referred to in exactly those terms.⁹ In this phrase Bloom also unconsciously foresees Molly's fortune, for later she recalls "this morning when I laid out the deck union with a young stranger neither dark nor fair . . . I thought it meant him [Boylan]" (18.1314-16). Shakespeare repeatedly uses the

word “fair” to describe the young man, but its meaning in the sonnets is “beautiful,” not “blonde.” In fact the youth’s hair is described as “buds of marjoram” (Sonnet 99) whose color is auburn, or a shade “neither dark nor fair.”

In the fortune-card passage mentioned above, Bloom calls Molly “Queen” and introduces a nursery rhyme with the phrase “Queen was in her bedroom eating bread and” (5.154-5). In the same sentence of that rhyme we find the “King . . . in the counting house counting all his money.”¹⁰ Boylan is repeatedly connected with money, from Molly’s query “Is that Boylan well off? He has money” (4.528-9), to laying out coins for a fruit basket, a racing bet, and a drink, to the recurrent sound of his jingling pockets. This aura of solvency is explicitly contrasted to that of Bloom, who continues to work for his meagre *Freeman* wage rather than “something where hed get regular pay or a bank where they could put him up on a throne to count the money” (18.505-6). Bloom’s pockets are silent in comparison to Boylan’s, and are filled with symbols of domesticity rather than of carefree wealth.¹¹ At one point Boylan is described as “a fare, a young gentleman, stylishly dressed” (11.879-80). Boylan’s money, his propensity to indulge, and his vibrant attire may all suggest royalty to Molly, but to Bloom he is far from representing nobility. Although most early Shakespeareans believed that the young man was a nobleman (either the Earl of Southampton or of Pembroke), both Oscar Wilde and Samuel Butler proposed that he was a common citizen—an actor and a ship’s cook respectively. As I will demonstrate later, Joyce used elements of both theories in the depiction of Boylan and in his role to Bloom.¹²

The “blackened court cards” Queen Molly shuffles and the “cat furry black” (5.155-6) echo the “four and twenty blackbirds” of the rhyme, as well as Molly’s dark features.¹³ References to Molly’s dark “Spanishy” coloring, her black “ravenhair” and dark eyes are as frequent as Shakespeare’s descriptions of his mistress’ “ravenblack” eyes, her “dun” breasts and black wiry hair (Sonnets 127, 130). One critic supports Joyce’s perception of Molly when he writes “Joyce called Molly ‘amoral,’ which surely she is.”¹⁴ Edward Kerchever Chambers, author of the “Shakespeare” entry in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* similarly translates the dark lady’s “female evil” and black deeds succinctly into “The woman is a wanton,”¹⁵ just as Stephen calls the sonnet mistress “the court wanton” (9.658). Both women are presented by their authors as operating outside of the conventional moral code, and both are meant to be understood by readers as characters who feel comfortable and remorseless about these amoral beliefs. Both women commit the same sin: the dark lady cuckolds Shakespeare with the auburn-haired “Willie Hughes”; the dark Molly cuckolds Bloom with the auburn-haired Hugh E. “Blazes” Boylan.¹⁶

Sidney Lee described the young man of the sonnets as having, in addition to auburn hair, blue eyes and pink cheeks.¹⁷ From Shakespeare’s own prodigious use of the words “fair” and “youth,” we also know that his friend was beautiful

and young. Boylan, too, is blue-eyed—"azure eyed Blazure's skyblue . . . eyes" (11.394)—and the "stalk of the red flower between his smiling teeth" (10.334-5) bears at least a figurative red blossom on his cheek. Whether he is beautiful or not, Boylan certainly emanates a sexual energy that attracts all women to him. Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy, the two barmaids in "Sirens," vie for his attention and speculate jealously on the origin of his red carnation (as does Molly in "Penelope" [18.125]). Though they had moments earlier proclaimed all "men frightful idiots" (11.79), at Boylan's entrance they rush to outsmile each other and wonder in turn what woman gave him the flower he now wears in his coat (11.366). Whatever his actual age, Boylan's manner is presented as youthlike—"jinglejaunty blazes boy" (11.290)—and compared to Bloom he is a significantly younger and more virile man, a difference Bloom is consciously aware of: "perhaps he [Boylan] young flesh in bed" (8.867), "Old Bloom" (11.49), "I. He. Old. Young" (11.583).

Oscar Wilde's essay on "Mr. W.H." is an important source for Boylan's dress and name. Wilde isolated the line "A man in hue all hues in his controlling" from Sonnet 20 to propose that the name of Shakespeare's young man was Willie Hughes. Though he is called Blazes, Boylan's first name is actually Hugh, with the middle initial E. Ellmann thinks it "likely that Joyce had in mind his classmate at University College, Dublin, the prim and proper Hugh Boyle Kennedy."¹⁸ It is just as likely, I believe, that Joyce had in mind Wilde's Willie Hughes, for he has Stephen in "Scylla and Charybdis" call him "Hughie Wills" (9.526), a name in which Boylan's own "Hugh E." appears. The word "hue" also suggests "color," and Boylan is the only colorfully dressed man in *Ulysses*. In contrast to the black-clad mourners and priests of Dublin, "dandy Boylan" (11.977) is "stylishly dressed in an indigoblue serge suit" (11.880), "smart tan shoes" (11.337), "a straw hat very dressy" (11.882), skyblue shirt, tie and socks, and a red carnation. Sidney Lee describes a portrait of the Earl of Southampton (whom he assumed to be Shakespeare's young friend of the sonnets) as a "young man resplendently attired" in a white satin doublet, "a pointed gorget of red leather," "purple garters embroidered in silver thread," and numerous other items of lavish material and style.¹⁹

Like the "gentle thief" of Sonnet 40, Boylan is related to the horse thievery of his father (12.999, 18.403), and in his own gentle way steals the carnation from the florist in "Wandering Rocks" (10.328). Ultimately, of course, he follows the lead of his fair young precursor and steals Molly sexually from Bloom. It is also suggested that Boylan may carry a venereal disease ("Some chap with a dose burning him" [8.101]), which Bloom thinks he may communicate to Molly, in a reversal of the dark lady's infection of Shakespeare's young friend (Sonnet 144). In Joyce's version, it is not the dark lady who may be physically impure, but the young man who may contaminate her. Joyce shifts the sympathy in Shakespeare's model from the young man to the mistress, a revision that is essential to his interpretation of the sonnet love triangle.

Although Leopold Bloom is identified with Shakespeare in various ways throughout *Ulysses*, in his role as the cuckold of the love triangle, it is important to narrow the evidence to the Shakespeare who wrote—and was assumed to be the subject of—his sonnets. While this Shakespeare, like Bloom, was concerned with procreation and immortality,²⁰ more important is the imputation of voyeurism and homosexuality onto both Shakespeare and Bloom. Each appears to allow and accept the “sensual fault” of his adulterous lover. Molly accuses Bloom of encouraging her (“hed never have the courage with a married woman thats why he wants me and Boylan” [18.1253-4]), of “trying to make a whore of me” (18.96), and of vicariously enjoying her affair (“thinking about me and Boylan set him off” [18.169-70]). Shakespeare offers his mistress to his friend in Sonnet 40 (“Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all”), and confesses in Sonnet 35 “That I an accessory needs must be/To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.” In his biography of Shakespeare, Frank Harris claims that the obsession with “sending someone to plead his love was constantly in Shakespeare’s mind.”²¹ Butler insists that the Bard “resolved to bring his own mistress and his friend together—believing this . . . to be the greatest service he could render him.”²² In his response to Nosey Flynn’s “Who’s getting it up?”, Bloom explains that “it’s like a company idea . . . Part shares and part profits” (8.786-7). By promptly “putting his hand in his pocket to scratch his groin,” Nosey Flynn may be identifying Bloom as the part that shares, and his wife (with Boylan) as the part that profits.

Bloom’s initial subconscious identification of Molly with Shakespeare’s dark lady and Boylan with the fair man of his sonnets develops as the novel progresses. Physical and moral parallels contribute to and support scenes where the sonnets operate as a source. In the final scene of “Lotus Eaters,” in which Bloom floats languidly in his lukewarm bath, Joyce is at work ironically rearranging elements of the final two sonnets to conform to the actions of his own characters. Sonnets 153 and 154, dismissed by many critics as poor imitations of a generic style, offer a distanced and traditional perspective on the love Shakespeare has presented so personally in the preceding poems. In both sonnets, the poet is seeking a cure for the passion he feels for his mistress in the mythical waters of a seething bath. These recuperative baths were created when a nymph of the goddess Diana passed the sleeping Cupid, and in an effort to douse and extinguish his flaming torch, inadvertently set the fountain to boil. It is possible to see in the Cupid of these sonnets a mythologized version of the fair young man of the earlier sonnets, whose youth and beauty Shakespeare himself compared to “A god in love” (Sonnet 110). Sonnet 126, which is actually a 12-line lyric, was written for the young man to play the part of Cupid in some lost mask, according to Samuel Butler’s inventive theories.²³

There is a similar, more comic, identification of Blazes Boylan with the figure of Cupid. Boylan is a man who instantaneously inspires sexual desire in the Ormond barmaids and who carries a version of Cupid’s bow (“Blazure’s

skyblue bow" [11.394]) in the form of a tie. His nickname "Blazes" unavoidably connotes fire and flame and his last name suggests youthful impatience ("Boylan with impatience" [11.289]), as well as forming a pun-echo of Shakespeare's boiling/Boylan bath. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s definition of "blaze" offers additional insight into the name Joyce carefully chose for his adulterer.

Blaze—(A.-S. *blaese*, a torch), a fire or bright flame; more nearly akin to the Ger. *bläss*, pale or shining white, is the use of the word for the white mark on the face of a horse or cow, and the American use for a mark made on a tree by cutting off a piece of bark.²⁴

Several implications arise here, the most obvious one Boylan's association with horse thieves and with that "gamey mare" (10.566-7) Molly, recalling also the sonnet-mistress as "that bay [a brown-colored mare] where all men ride" (Sonnet 137). Secondly, there is the definition of blaze as "torch" and the synonymous word "brand" to signify the marking on a horse or a tree. Not only does Boylan "brand" Bloom a cuckold and Molly an adultress, as Shakespeare's "name receives a brand" (Sonnet 111) by the affair of his friend and mistress, but Cupid's torch is also described as "his brand" and "his heart-inflaming brand" in Sonnets 153 and 154.

Whereas Boylan is associated with fire and Cupid, Molly is linked with water and nymphs. Sally Abbott has expertly examined the goddess Artemis as a source for Molly Bloom,²⁵ an association which extends to include an identification with water, fertility and nymphs.²⁶ Molly is first linked with nymphs when Bloom uses the painting "Bath of the Nymph" which hangs over their bed to explain to her the meaning of "metempsychosis." Though far from lithe or chaste, Molly compares herself to the image: "would I be like that bath of the nymph with my hair down yes only shes younger" (18.562-3). Shakespeare's dark mistress is likewise considered "as rare/As any she belied with false compare" (Sonnet 130), although she hardly resembles ideal goddess-like beauty.

Like the nymph "maid of Dian" in the last two sonnets, Molly will—by the end of *Ulysses*—have steeped Cupid/Boylan's "brand" and "quenched" his fire, as Shakespeare's mistress has done for the fair young man. Despite the narrative innocence of the nymph's fire-quenching gesture, the interpretation of a sexual implication inherent in the act is encouraged by the lack of chasteness in the preceding sonnets. In Molly there is a less subtle mixing of the qualities of goddess with those of the wanton woman—much like Ann Hathaway, who simultaneously is a "greyeyed goddess" and a "boldfaced Stratford wench" (9.258-60).

In "Lotus Eaters" Joyce transforms the poet Shakespeare, "the father of all his race" (9.868-9) bathing in "seething" water, into Leopold Bloom, "the limp father of thousands" (5.571), soaking in a "gentle tepid" bath. Earlier in the chapter Bloom has been identified with the gelded horses, "a stump of black

guttapercha wagging limp between their haunches" (5.218), and the "eunuchs in their choir" (5.408).²⁷ Bloom's genitals are a "languid floating flower" (5.571-2), while Shakespeare is yet able to "Stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side" (Sonnet 151). The Bard has sought the mythical curative power of the baths to dispel his lust, and possibly to cure venereal disease. His bath has been created by Greek or Roman gods, envoys from the ancient birthplace of literature. By contrast, the "pard" Bloom heads toward the exotic Egyptian-like baths, reminiscent of his Eastern homeland, with the rather domestic need to wash. The only desire he feels is a half-hearted urge to urinate: "Also I think I. Yes I. Do it in the bath. Curious longing I. Water to water" (5.503-4). As Joyce was familiar with Havelock Ellis' concept of "Undinism"—or the connection between urination and eroticism²⁸—this scene suggests a perversion of Bloom's sexuality as well as a misdirected response to the prospective infidelity of Molly with Boylan, of which he has just learned.

Shakespeare's "disease" of lust is inverted, or perverted, in Bloom: if the latter has any sexual desire for Molly, it is translated into the displaced desire to urinate. Richard Brown suggests that Joyce interpreted such sexual anomaly as "an aspect of human creativity and imagination."²⁹ While this act might be seen as Bloom's feeble version of Shakespeare's fertile creative output, it seems more accurate to say that Bloom suffers from infertility and requires a cure to regain his desire for Molly. If Cupid represents the young man, the suggestion follows that the poet Shakespeare is endeavoring to quench his lust by immersing himself in water that is heated by his friend's lust for the same woman. Not surprisingly, the cure is unsuccessful, while implications of voyeurism, homosexuality, and masochism are easily drawn. The same implications arise as a result of Bloom's physical passivity and absence of response to either Boylan or Molly. But implicit in Bloom's bath-scene is his lack of progenitive or artistic power compared to Shakespeare, "the father of all his race" (9.868-9). Both men leave their baths with their affliction uncured and return to the dark ladies with what seems to be no alternative but to learn to live with the weight of their horns. But while the Bard turned this "crisis of . . . [his] life" into "the subject of the sonnets,"³⁰ Bloom remains the "pard" whose creative silence ultimately allows the dark lady's voice to be heard.

Imbedded in the fugue of the "Sirens" chapter is the sad melody of the moment of Molly's adultery with Boylan, a tune Bloom cannot help but hear. It is approaching 4:00, the hour of the lovers' tryst, and Bloom is trapped in a booth in the Ormond Hotel where he is forced to overhear Boylan's last escapade before the young man saunters to 7 Eccles Street to take Bloom's place in Molly's bed. As one critic points out,³¹ Blazes Boylan is constantly associated with the passing of time. Like the young man of Sonnet 126, "who in thy power/Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour," Boylan controls the clock in *Ulysses*, and exercises power over the older Bloom by virtue of this association.

Although the scene between Boylan and Molly is never described, I believe their act of adultery—even before it actually occurs—is woven throughout this episode, in foreshadowy suggestions that occur to Bloom and in other subsurface images. Shakespeare's Sonnet 128, in which the poet jealously watches his mistress play on the virginal, is a hidden but important key to understanding the love triangle at work in this episode. There is a piano in the Ormond which has just been moved (11.276), perhaps at exactly the same time Molly was rearranging the furniture (including the piano) in the Blooms' house.³² As we know from the sheet music in "Ithaca," Boylan and Molly will soon be at the piano playing and singing "Love's Old Sweet Song," a tune that recurs in Bloom's thoughts. When Simon Dedalus gazes into the piano, he foreshadows Boylan standing with Molly at her piano. Joyce suggests this duality in the vagueness of his language. "Upholding the lid he (who?)" questions the identity of the subject; and "he pressed (the same who pressed indulgently her hand)" (11.291-3) is simultaneously Simon, who has held the barmaid's hand, and "Boylan [who] gave my hand a great squeeze" (18.78).

In Sonnet 128, addressed to the dark lady, it is the "saucy jacks" (with the implication of "forward men" and possibly related to Boylan as "Sauce for the gander" [11.877]) that press to "kiss the tender inward of thy hand." The virginal was a small version of the piano intended for young girls, like the "dummy pianos" Bloom imagines girls learning on (11.843). Oscar Wilde's narrator twice identifies "Mr. W.H." as the Earl of Essex's musician, who was called "to play upon the virginals and to sing." Wilde writes that "surely the boy who played on the virginals . . . was none other than the Will Hews to whom Shakespeare dedicated the sonnets."³³ Joyce's description of the piano's action is curiously similar to Shakespeare's, the more so because both authors focus not on the keys pressed down but on the keys rising up, as in "the thicknesses of felt advancing" (11.293-4) and "those jacks that nimble leap" (Sonnet 128).³⁴ "The keys" of the Ormond piano, instead of descending as usual, "rose higher, told, faltered, confessed, confused" (11.603).

The "wiry concord" of the sonnet, or the harmony of three strings sounding a chord, are related to the "triple (piano!) wires" (11.292) joining in harmony with other "wires": the telegraph wire Boylan expects, as well as the rubberband Bloom winds "round four [tuning?] forkfingers . . . in octave" (11.683-4) which he later plucks to create a sound.

Bloom, like the poet of the sonnets, is positioned outside of the activity which is focused around the piano; he is left like an outsider to observe jealously and to speculate on the affair in which a younger man has taken his place. The ryefield in which Stephen had earlier placed Shakespeare and Ann Hathaway in "Scylla and Charybdis" (9.263) reappears in "Sirens" as "Blue Bloom is on the rye" (11.230-1), "ryebloom" (11.390), and "O'er ryehigh blue . . . Bloom stood up" (11.1126-7). The ryefield is an obvious reference by Joyce to Shakespeare, sexuality, and female domination (a parallel used also in *Finnegans Wake* and

discussed by Vincent Cheng).³⁵ Here the ryefield has become blue, suggesting both Bloom's mood and the blue-eyed Boylan who has usurped the husband's place in the field. In "Lotus Eaters" Bloom got a bath while Boylan got the girl; in "Sirens," while Boylan heads toward Molly's bed, Bloom is left, like the line of the nursery rhyme, with "a pocket full of rye."

The influence of other sonnets is evident in this chapter, particularly the comparison of ideal to real beauty in Sonnet 130.³⁶ If one grants that the adulterous moment lurks beneath the surface of the action of "Sirens," then Molly emerges as chaste nymph/wanton woman who is latent in the two siren barmaids (the snapping of Miss Douce's garter, for example, foreshadows Boylan's later slapping of Molly's thigh). Indeed, Sidney Lee called Mary Fitton—a candidate for Shakespeare's dark lady—a "siren,"³⁷ and Fitton's child by the supposed "young man" William Herbert died, like Rudy, soon after its birth.³⁸ Joyce's physical description of the two barmaids is a continual challenge to the ideal by the real, a study in comparison not unlike Sonnet 130. Joyce presents an unfavorable physical portrayal of lips, breasts, hair, cheeks, breath, and voice, all of which are described with equal unfavor in Sonnet 130. Shakespeare's mistress' "breasts are dun" and Miss Bronze's neck is sunburnt; like "bronze's teabathed lips" (11.266) her lips are not as red as coral; and the barmaids' "shrill shriek of laughter" (11.143) too has a sound less pleasing than music. Bloom compares Simon Dedalus' tobacco to "shreds of hair, her maidenhair" (11.222), recalling the dark lady's "black wires." This ironic portrayal of beauty is held up against the picture of a goddess, "Bassi's blessed virgins" (11.151), that Bloom has just seen. Bloom immediately associates the picture with Molly, waiting for Boylan/Raoul (11.300-1), though the wanton Molly is described not long after as having "left off clothes of all descriptions" (11.496-7). In Sonnet 130 Shakespeare claims he "never saw a goddess go," while Bloom thinks "Goddess I didn't see" (11.1089-90). This comparison and mixing of the ideal with the real, and the sympathy for the latter in everyday life, is a recurrent characteristic of Leopold Bloom's emotional life throughout *Ulysses*. In "Lotus Eaters" he considers admonishing a young boy for smoking a cigarette—"Tell him if he smokes he won't grow"—then immediately sympathizes with the youth's primarily imagined plight: "O let him! His life isn't such a bed of roses" (5.8). At the end of "Sirens" Bloom reacts similarly to a "frowsy whore" who passes him. Again, he begins a condemnation—"Looks a fright in the day. Face like dip. Damn her"—and abruptly replaces it with understanding: "O, well, she has to live like the rest" (11.1259-60). Bloom's compassion for the "real" reasons behind people's faults or their failure to resemble the "ideal," plays a vital role in his failure to condemn or refusal to act against Molly's infidelity. It is significant that the above-mentioned examples of this tendency occur in two of the episodes which most rely on elements of Shakespeare's sonnet love triangle. For, like Bloom, Shakespeare fails to act to stop the affair by which he is made a cuckold. Despite their pain and embarrassment,

both men ultimately accept the adulterous intersection of the triangle in which they are involved, thus symbolically hornning themselves. There are suggestions in *Ulysses*, as there are in much of the material written about the Shakespeare of the sonnets, that both men received some degree of vicarious pleasure from an affair which they may very well have encouraged.

In the sonnets, Shakespeare's acceptance of the infidelity is clearly motivated by his love for the young man: "thus I will excuse ye:/Thou dost love her, because thou knows't I love her" (Sonnet 42), and "Upon thy side against myself I'll fight/ And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn" (Sonnet 88). Clearly, the poet idealized the young man, and the reality of his more recent unfaithful behavior threatens to destroy that ideal. It is Shakespeare's attachment to the absolute of the ideal, Heather Dubrow suggests, that leads him ultimately to overlook the "sensual fault," thereby preventing any resolution of the love triangle on Shakespeare's part.³⁹

Both Bloom and the sonnet-Shakespeare are rendered incapable of preventative or vengeful action by their dependence on equal but opposite modes of perceiving people: Shakespeare is too attached to the ideal, Bloom to the real. If Shakespeare is the "lover of an ideal or a perversion" (9.1022), as Stephen claims, then Bloom is a lover of the real and of its too often inherent perversion. Within the love triangle, neither man is capable of the type of judgment that would provide the motivating impetus to act. Shakespeare forgives his friend; Bloom symbolically ties his hands together in "Sirens" and listens to Boylan jingle toward Molly. It may be argued that Bloom is able to judge and condemn the narrator in "Cyclops," and that Shakespeare freely condemns his mistress of treachery in Sonnet 131. But it is the additional ingredient of self-blame on the part of Bloom and Shakespeare that neutralizes their capacity to act and to interfere with the unhappy dynamic of the love triangle. Shakespeare calls himself an "accessory" to the affair, provoking Samuel Butler's assertion that the poet arranged his own cuckoldry. Bloom's eleven-year refusal to have sexual intercourse with his wife redirects the blame for his cuckoldry back onto himself. As Joseph Allen Boone points out, "talk of Boylan's sexual prowess [is] a constant reminder to the husband of his fear that he is not satisfying Molly."⁴⁰ In "Sirens" Bloom has one last thought of stopping Molly when he thinks he could "Still hold her back. Call name. Touch water." But the "jingle jaunty" of Boylan interferes, and Bloom realizes it is "Too late. She longed to go. That's why. Woman. As easy stop the sea. Yes: all is lost" (11.639-41). Later he expresses something approaching sympathy for her unmet sexual desire when he thinks "She ought to. Come" (11.754). Bloom recognizes the "real" motivations behind Molly's less than "ideal" adultery, and seems to understand, if not sympathize, with them.

Molly and Boylan's affair is recurrently associated in Bloom's mind with the novel *Sweets of Sin*, a title which mixes sugar with Eve's evil apple, pleasure with pain, and innocence with lust. Richard Brown claims that the title of the

book through which the Blooms perceive their relationship was a product of Joyce's imagination.⁴¹ If so, Joyce may very well have found inspiration once again in Shakespeare. In Sonnet 95, the verse "O, in what *sweets* dost thou thy *sins* enclose!" (my italics) illuminates a similar dichotomy in the love triangle of Shakespeare's "sugar'd sonnets." Bloom emerges from this dichotomy—as he does from the "Lotus Eaters" bath—as an emotional inversion of Shakespeare; for while the still passionate Shakespeare is seduced by the sweetness and led to overlook the sin, the impotent Bloom accepts the sin as being sweet in itself. Harold Bloom has written that in *Ulysses* Shakespeare "was betrayed because as an artist he would rather see than do, not asserting himself in actual life but . . . fulfilling himself in creating the various persons of his plays."⁴² Bloom, by contrast, is portrayed as the impotent artist who seems sufficiently fulfilled in allowing his wife to assert herself "in actual life." Though Bloom has momentarily considered writing a story with and about his wife (4.518-33), it seems unlikely that he will surpass the "first piece of original verse written by him, potential poet, at the age of 11" (17.392-3). Even the potential artist Stephen Dedalus, "can never be a poet" unless, the sarcastic Buck Mulligan projects, "he is going to write something in ten years" (10.1089-90). I do not intend to suggest that through her assertive adultery Molly becomes the artist that Stephen and Bloom fail to become—only that Joyce invests her with a creative potential that is at least equal to theirs. As Bonnie Kime Scott and other feminist critics have noted, Joyce's presentation of Molly "goes beyond the simple role of virgin-whore of the traditional popular romance."⁴³ Just as Stephen's Shakespeare theory gives "women a central position in Shakespeare's plays and in his life,"⁴⁴ Joyce's reinterpretation of the poet's sonnets gives the dark lady a voice of her own, as well as the final word on her role as adultress in the love triangle. By transforming Bloom as cuckold from an idealizing poet into a sympathetic husband and by giving his wife the lyric coda to their epic, the fair young man of the love triangle becomes no more idealized than the dark lady becomes eternally dishonored. It is in this sense, I believe, that *Ulysses* comes closest to being the "mistresspiece" Joyce claimed it to be.

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NOTES

- 1 Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses"* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1960), p. 117.
- 2 Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1898), p. 159.

- 3 Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 24.
- 4 Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), p. 117. Ellmann also notes (p. 23) that Joyce urged his wife Nora to have an affair in order to provide him with material for his book. Bloom, too, considers writing a story involving Molly's potential adultery (4.518-33).
- 5 Throughout this paper all chapter and line numbers in parentheses are from James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).
- 6 William Schutte, *Joyce and Shakespeare: A Study in the Meaning of "Ulysses"* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957), p. 127.
- 7 Vincent John Cheng, *Shakespeare and Joyce: A Study of "Finnegans Wake"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 40-41.
- 8 Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 337. Ellmann suggests that Joyce, like Bloom, may have had a sneaking regard for the burly masculinity Boylan represents.
- 9 As Don Gifford and Robert Seidman note in *Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (New York: Dutton, 1974), these figures are also those of the tarot cards. Since the phrase occurs as a subconscious thought by Bloom in a scene fraught with reference to his wife's infidelity, and in an episode in which Bloom is unquestionably compared to Shakespeare, Joyce is identifying the pair with Shakespeare's sonnet figures as much as with the tarot card figures.
- 10 For the full text of the rhyme, see Iona and Peter Opie, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 394.
- 11 See Peter Sims' incisive and lively look at the larger role of pockets and their contents in "A Pocket Guide to *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* 26 (1989): 239-58.
- 12 Oscar Wilde, *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1921) and Samuel Butler, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1899). Little if any critical use has been made of Butler's book, which was definitely in Joyce's library (see the Appendix in Ellmann, *Consciousness*, p. 103: "Stamped 'J.J.' Purchased after 29 September 1917").
- 13 In the rhyme, one of these blackbirds snaps off the nose of the royal couple's maid while she is "hanging out the clothes." This provocative amputation, though unmentioned by Joyce, may nevertheless suggest the castration of the domestic Bloom—who "had washed his wife's undergarments when soiled" (16.716-17)—by Molly and Boylan's "dainty dish" of potted meat, eaten in bed.
- 14 James Van Dyke Card, "'Contradicting': The Word for 'Penelope,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 11 (1973): 22.
- 15 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Shakespeare," 24:783.
- 16 In the sonnets, Shakespeare is technically a mere metaphorical cuckold, since his dark lady mistress is not his wife. Joyce, however, whose concept of marriage was considerably less than legally technical (see Brown on "The fiction of marriage," pp. 22-35), surely saw the betrayal as literal cuckoldry.
- 17 Butler, p. 54.

- 18 Ellmann, *Joyce*, p. 378.
- 19 Lee, p. 145. Southampton, too—like Boylan—was apparently no “stranger to the delights of gambling” (p. 377).
- 20 In Bloom’s case this procreative concern is directed selfward. If we accept Oscar Wilde’s idea (repeated by Stephen [9.526]) that Mr. W.H. is “William Himself,” then Shakespeare, too, may be addressing his own failure to procreate and produce a son to replace the dead Hamnet. Jean Kimball’s essay, “Family Romance and Hero Myth: A Psychoanalytic Context for the Paternity Theme in *Ulysses*,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 20 (1983): 161-73, which discusses Otto Rank and Shakespeare’s self-dedicated sonnets, examines this idea further.
- 21 Frank Harris, *The Man Shakespeare And His Tragic Life-Story* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), p. 210.
- 22 Butler, p. 73.
- 23 Butler, p. 66.
- 24 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. “Blaze,” 4:49.
- 25 Sally Abbott, “Artemis: The Pre-Homeric Source of Marion Tweedy Bloom,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 23 (1986): 497-500.
- 26 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. “Artemis,” 2:664. This as well as the “Diana” and “Nymph” entries seems to have contributed to Joyce’s knowledge of the goddess.
- 27 If Artemis is a source for Molly, Bloom’s identification with eunuchs may echo the eunuch priests who served one of the incarnations of the goddess Artemis. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Artemis,” 2:665.
- 28 Brown, p. 84.
- 29 Brown, p. 85.
- 30 Harris, pp. 200-201.
- 31 Sheldon Brivic, “Time, Sexuality and Identity in Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 7 (1969): 44.
- 32 Also, the piano tuner has left behind his tuning fork in the bar, and Boylan will leave behind his ripped horse-bet tickets in the Blooms’ apartment. “The seat he [Bloom] sat on: warm” (11.342) prefigures the pressed chair he will later find in his apartment, as well as the crumby indentation on his side of the bed. It is as if the game of musical chairs at which Bloom and Molly met is being played out again, but this time Bloom is playing alone. He gets a seat, but Boylan, “warmseated” (11.526), gets Molly.
- 33 Wilde, p. 69. Lee, too, mentions “a contemporary musician called William Hughes” (n.p. 93).
- 34 G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1772. The confusing transition from the “wood” or keys to “jacks” in Sonnet 128 has necessitated footnotes attempting to explain an apparent misuse by the poet of the word jacks—the devices which “pluck the strings”—for keys.
- 35 Cheng, p. 119.

- 36 Shakespeare as cast out of the favor of Fortune, an idea expressed in Sonnets 27, 111, and 124, may also be involved here. Molly has foreseen her sexual encounter with Boylan in her deck of cards, and one of Boylan's last words before he goes to meet her is "Fortune" (11.373). Bloom, by contrast, and like Shakespeare, is left out and disgraced by "Fortune."
- 37 Butler, p. 43.
- 38 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Mary Fitton," 10:440.
- 39 Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 222-23.
- 40 Joseph Allen Boone, "A New Approach to Bloom as 'Womanly Man': The Mixed Middling in *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* 20 (1982): 74.
- 41 Brown, p. 134.
- 42 Harold Bloom, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), p. 22.
- 43 Bonnie Kime Scott, *James Joyce* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), p. 30.
- 44 Brown, p. 102.